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Pulpit Preaching

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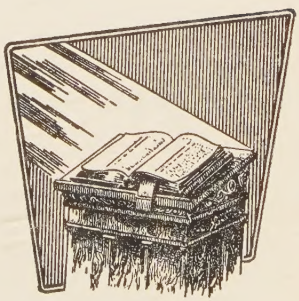

BOOKS FOR PULPIT PREACHING

An Expository Preacher's Notebook by D. W. Cleverley Ford, B.B.C. preacher and minister of Holy Trinity Church, South Kensington, points the way to meaningful Biblical preaching through many pertinent suggestions on expository sermonizing and abundant representative samples. (Harper & Brothers, 220 pp., $3.50)

Love Is a Spendthrift by Paul Scherer is a book of meditations for the Christian year and marks, after a fashion, his retirement at Union Theological Seminary. To preachers who have been challenged by the heart and mind—and charmed by his distinctive manner of expressing God's Word—this book will be a volume to treasure. To these and others, the book will prove to be what Scherer's writings have always been—a source of vigorous, forceful, perceptive, and inspiring ideas for both devotional experiences and for sermon preparation. (Harper & Brothers, 230 pp., $3.75)

Wherefore Art Thou Come?, a series of eighteen meditations on the Lord's Supper by James T. Cleland, dean of the chapel at Duke University, represents the most meaningful and appropriate sermons for the Supper to have come into this reader's hands for a long period. The breadth and depth of the Supper are illuminated in meditations which suggest old and new meanings and combine inspiration with instruction. This excellent volume should be welcomed by every pastor who is alert to inter-

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WORTH QUOTING

E. Paul Hovey
The Federated Churches
Lewiston, Idaho

Some people would like to take a trip to the moon but are afraid to sit in the front row at church.
Harold Helfer

* * *

Nobody likes to feel guilty, so people develop beliefs that will justify their actions. Ira L. Reiss

* * *

Under the picture of Peter Milne in the church he founded on the little island of Nguna in the New Hebrides are these words: "When he came there was no light. When he died there was no darkness."

* * *

In the course of history more people have died from their drink and their dope than have died for their religion and their country. The craving for ethyl alcohol and the opiates has been stronger in these millions than the love of God, of home, of children, even of life. Their cry was not liberty or death; it was for death preceded by enslavement. Aldous Huxley

* * *

In Moffatt's translation of the Bible, this sentence is found in Ecclesiastes: "He is a fool who folds his hands and lets life go to ruin." Life will go to ruin, you know, if we sit with idle

(Please turn to page 29)

Next month's sermon themes will be "What Is a Christian?" and "The Divinity of Christ."

Pulpit Preaching

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CHRISTIAN BEHAVIOR

LIFE: A MASTERPIECE OR A MESS?

Maxie D. Dunnam, Trinity Methodist Church, Gulfport, Mississippi

If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things have passed away; behold, all things are become new. 2 Corinthians 5:17.

"Life can be a masterpiece, a mixture, or a mess." These words of Joseph Fort Newton are confirmed in the experience of each of us every day. Life can be a masterpiece or a mess. Recently I heard the pathetic testimony of a woman, now coming to middle age of life, who confesses with great sorrow that she has made a mess of things. Throughout her life she has selfishly sought pleasure and neglected the feelings of her husband and children. She now knows the emptiness of despair that comes to those who have given nothing worthwhile to life and so receive nothing from it. The fire of love that once burned brightly on the hearths of two young hearts has been extinquished by her selfish pursuits. Babies, born into the home, have passed through childhood without knowing the strong bond of devotion that should bind a mother to her children. With no lasting chain of love linking the family together, the mother knows heartbreaking loneliness. She sees the closeness of her husband to the children, yet she does not know that closeness. She keeps muttering to herself, "What a mess I've made!"

I

When we are sincere we have to confess that in many areas of life we have made a mess. We have been selfish in our pursuits. We have thought only of that which would bring happiness to us. We have forgotten that such pursuits always make brittle our relationship to others. Bishop Kennedy has told of a young man being interviewed by a theater owner for the job of usher. The young man was asked, "What would you do in case of a fire?" The youth replied, "Oh, don't worry about me. I'll get out all right."

This has been our thought. We will take care of number one. This results in a dreadful hell. For

> Hell is a place of everlasting noise,
> Where voices, plaintive and obnoxious, cry
> Over and over again their favorite word
> In constant reiteration, "I, I, I."

The trouble with many pepole is that "every time they think, they think of themselves." This thought makes life a mess. We end by stewing in our own juice. A farmer imported some especially fine seed-corn and produced a crop that was the envy of his neighbors. When they sought some of the seed, he refused, fearing to lose the competitive advantage he had gained. The second year, his crop was not good; the third year, results were even worse. It suddenly dawned upon him that the poor-grade corn of his neighbors was pollinating his prize corn. His selfishness had caught up with him.

We learn the lesson, though often late, that stock bought in selfish pursuits only pays dividends of loneliness and futility.

Not only have we made a mess of living by being selfish in our pursuits,

but we have also muddied the pond of life with confused systems of values. We ultimately discover that those things we thought to be important have no lasting significance. And when we turn in later years to probe the depth of our experience to find eternal values that will give meaning to our day by day life, we discover that there is nothing there. We are empty and void. The plants of life and culture that we cultivated have wasted in the noon-day sun, and the harvest is meager. When will we learn to cultivate an orchard of values that will produce fruits of the spirit?

"The Christian Century" editorialized recently on the return of Elvis Presley to civilian life. Though away from the American public for a season, his claim to dubious fame as America's sex idol is still intact. For one night's appearance on a network TV program he received no less than $125,000.00. For two songs he received more than the yearly salary of the President of the United States and three times the yearly salary of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. An identical sum of money would pay the salaries of 25 teachers, 42 ministers ,or 63 farm hands in many of our states. It would provide a year's training for 30 or more nurses, would give 125 young people a year in college, would stock ten mission hospitals with elemental tools and drugs, and would feed 3,000 refugee children for a whole year. The editorial continues: "The money paid Presley was worse than wasted. The evil effects which such performers leave in the minds of viewers are eventually paid for by every American citizen. They reveal the depth of decadence into which our scale of values has sunk. So long as we continue to tolerate and even to applaud such revolting exhibitionism, so long as we heap riches on those who degrade life, so long as we permit this media of communication to pour such distasteful and pernicious programs into the home at the twist of the youngster's wrist, we can blame nobody but ourselves when we come to the ruin which always awaits such a people."

Life becomes more turbid as it progresses if we do not settle on values that are eternal. We, too, end up saying, "What a mess I've made!"

II

But life doesn't have to be a mess. It can be a masterpiece. Even though we have made a mess of it, it can be salvaged. If the Christian Gospel has anything to say to man it is this: You do not have to be tomorrow what you are today. Regeneration is a word that cannot be left out of the Christian vocabulary. For this is the central affirmation of Christianity — you can be changed! Life can be salvaged. Human nature can be genuinely, radically, and permanently transformed. The impure can become pure. The drunkard can become sober. The grouch can become genial. That person who is plagued by an unharnessed temper can learn the art of self-control. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things have passed away; behold, all things are become new." This was Paul's shout of conviction. It is a new life for all — not a mess, but a masterpiece. Sin cannot destroy it. The past cannot shackle it. It is too good to be true, but it is true. We can have a new life, born of faith from within.

We all need this new life. Even the best of us have left our Father's home to wander into a far country. We have hopelessly gone astray. We have missed the mark. If we could see our situation as it actually is, we would know that we stand in need of the power of transformation. The confession of the little girl in a revival meeting is a sincere one. While the evangelist was giving the invitation for penitents to come forward, the four year old said, "Mommy, I believe I'd better go, too." "Why," said the mother, "aren't you a Christian, dear?" "Well," said the little girl candidly, "I think I am; but you know there

are times when I don't act like one at all."

What is the problem? "For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not ,that I do." (Rom. 7:19). We are prone to make a mess of things. But we need not. For there is an answer, even as Paul discovered: 'I thank God there is a way out through Jesus Christ our Lord. No condemnation now hangs over the head of those who are 'in' Jesus Christ. For the new spiritual principle of life 'in' Christ lifts me out of the old vicious circle of sin and death" (Rom. 7:25—8:1-2, Phillips).

III

To find this "new spiritual principle of life in Christ" that transforms life from a mess to a masterpiece, we must realize that we are not self-sufficient as we have thought ourselves to be. Though unawares, we have lived as though God was wholly irrelevant. We have thought that we could take care of things in our own way and in our own power. Lyman Abbott wrote a new "Lord's Prayer" to fit this thought: "Our brethren who are upon the earth, hallowed be our name; our kingdom come, our will be done on earth, for there is no heaven. We must get our daily bread. We neither forgive nor are we forgiven, for nature knows no forgiveness. We fear no temptation, we deliver ourselves from evil. And ours is the kingdom, and ours the power, for there is no glory and no forever. Amen."

We cringe at the sacrilege of this. But let's be honest. When we have really made a mess of life, hasn't it been that we have thought ourselves self-sufficient and without need of God? Remember the words of Cassius, "The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves." Said Bernard of Clairvaux centuries ago, "Nothing can work me damage except myself; I am a real sufferer by my own fault." When we learn this we will have painted the first master strokes on the masterpiece of life.

It is then that we realize that only God makes possible a masterpiece of life. The forces upon which we must depend are beyond us. We do not snap our fingers, or wave a wand, or pronounce some magic word and expect change. We have a role to play, but let us never forget that we are directed by God. Charles M. Crowe recalls the striking words of William Gaxton ,the famous star of stage and screen, which should have a special meaning to those seeking to make a masterpiece of life: "It takes a true artist to play superbly well whatever role God assigns us in the stock company of our years. You need to get up and give of yourself whether you feel sick, or sad, or angry, or beaten, or discouraged, or betrayed. You must have nothing backstage to trip you up. You need to put on the best face and the rightest costume you can manage and walk on proudly to play your part, with your ear keen for the Prompter's voice. For God wrote the lines of our lives and set the scene. He's the Author and Producer. It's up to us to be a distinguished member of his cast, and work to be one of his stars."

Do you get it?

Only God can remake a man, but man must let him. This means that our desire for life must be so real, so strong, so deep, that we will put our lives in the hands of God knowing that with his power we can move out of the mess we have made of life and begin to shape the masterpiece which God intended for us.

IV

There is this final step. We must surrender the freedom we thought to be freedom and become bound to the Master who is greater than ourselves. There is a paradox here. We are never really free until we are bound. We must be voluntarily mastered by a power greater than ourselves. Our lives must be completely surrendered to Christ. "Make me a captive, Lord, and then I shall be free."

Consider the story of the Prodigal

Son. He was looking for the full life when he left home. He had not thought of making a mess of things. He was searching for life. But where did he find it? Not in the far country away from the demands and limitations of home. He found it only as he returned home. There would be demands there as there had always been. There would be limitations. But there would also be love, companionship, security, peace. There would be the real chance of making a masterpiece of life.

Wallace Hamilton has recalled a story told by Bob Bartlett, that irrepressible explorer. On a voyage one summer he and his party brought back a large number of caged birds. Along about mid-ocean one restless bird escaped from his cage. In ecstasy of freedom, he flew away and they watched him out across the water until he disappeared in the blue of the sky. That bird is lost," they said. Some hours passed, and to their surprise, they saw it again coming toward the ship on heavy wing. Panting and breathless, the little feathered prodigal dropped upon the deck. Far over the trackless water, how eagerly the little bird had sought that ship again! It was no longer a prison but a home — the only way across the deep.

We are in the far country now, we have wandered far from home, we have sought escape from the limitations we have known, and we have even thought that we would find real life. But we know now. What a mess I've made!" The questions are, Will we allow God to remake us? Will we surrender ourselves completely to Christ? The answer to these questions will determine whether our life will be a masterpiece or mess.

LOVE'S DOUBLE DUTY

Ralph W. Sockman, Christ Church, New York, New York

When a certain lawyer once asked Jesus what is the great commandment in the law, the Master replied: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." Then Jesus went right on to add, "And a second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'; on these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets." Why did Jesus hasten to add that second commandment? My belief is that the two commandments are linked together because each requires the other.

I

First, our love for God requires love for our neighbor in order to fulfill itself. How much does it mean to ourselves or to others if we say that we love God but do not show it in love to our neighbors? Stephen Benet in his poem, "John Brown's Body" pictures the captain of a slave ship who was faithful in his prayers but saw nothing wrong about his traffic in human bodies.

Tradition has it that Sir John Bowring, when British governor of Hong Kong, promoted the opium trade with China. Yet Sir John wrote the tenderly beautiful hymn:

> In the cross of Christ I glory,
> Towering o'er the wrecks of time,
> All the light of sacred story,
> Gathers round that head sublime.

Because men can thus think that they love God regardless of their attitude toward others, the First Epistle of John flares forth these flaming words: "If any one says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen."

Jesus, in his description of the Last Judgment, makes it clear that the redeemed are those who had shown

their love for God by their service to the hungry, the sick, the poor, even to the least. And at the Last Supper after Judas had left the room, our Lord said to the faithful eleven, "By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

Yes, we show our love for God by our love for others. That is an oft-repeated assertion and perhaps a bit obvious. But let us go on to say something perhaps not quite so obvious. We learn to love God by loving one another.

How would a boy learn to love God as a Father if he had never known parental love? Suppose an orphaned lad were placed in an institution where he never experienced any tender care like that of a father or mother? Thank God, there are few if any such institutions left in our land, but if there were, how would their inmates comprehend the Fatherhood of God?

Or suppose a person had never made any sacrifice for others, had never put himself out to help others, how would you explain to such a person the principle of the cross of Christ? How could such a man understand the love which led Christ to serve people who never paid him, to heal people who never thanked him, and at last to die for those who persecuted him? It is by our love toward others that we come to understand God's love toward us and thereby come to feel love for Him.

Several years ago a Scandinavian novelist, Johan Bojer, wrote a book of fiction in which he told of an engineer who went to live in the country. His neighbor's dog killed his little girl. The cruel loss drove the father almost insane. At first it shattered his faith. Later a famine came to that region. The engineer took some of his meager supply of seed corn and planted it in the field of the neighbor whose dog had killed his beloved little daughter. When the bereaved father was asked the reason for his kindness to the owner of the dog, his answer was: "I did it that God might live." I have told this story before, but I refer to it again because the point penetrates my mind more deeply every time I recall it. It is deeds like that which make God come alive in our hearts. God lives eternally, but he becomes the living God to us only when we do something godlike in our love for others.

II

Now let us turn the tables and see the second basic fact: that our love for neighbor requires the love of God to fulfill it.

Let's be honest. When we are told to love our neighbors as ourselves, do not many of us feel that it is a counsel of perfection, and not really practicable or possible? Is not love a natural, spontaneous emotion called forth by the lovableness of a person or the attractiveness of an object? And so many people say: "Look at my neighbors. They are unattractive, selfish, quarrelsome. How can I be expected to love them?" Moreover, the airplane has made the globe into a neighborhood. How can we feel affection for the millions of people in Europe or Africa or Asia?

Well, let us be clear that the Bible does not command us to have the same kind of affection for outsiders that we feel toward the members of our families and our intimate personal associates. When the New Testament speaks of love for father or mother, or brother or sister, it uses the Greek word, "fileo" which means intimate affection. When the gospels speak of loving one's neighbor or one's enemy, they use the Greek word, "agapao", which means active, persistent goodwill. It would be unnatural and undesirable to feel the same emotions toward strangers as toward one's closest friends and relatives. But Christ does expect us to have for our neighbors the same thoughtful good will, the same persistent concern for their welfare that we have for ourselves.

The measure of our love for our neighbor is the love we have for ourselves. And how do we love ourselves? We do not always like ourselves. If we did, we would be blind to our own faults. The fellow who always likes himself and approves of all his own actions is rather insufferable. As we say, he is "stuck on himself." And the fellow who is "stuck on himself" is usually stuck with himself. Nobody else wants him. A healthy, normal person often dislikes himself for what he is doing, often criticizes himself, sometimes punishes himself. But through it all he loves himself in the sense that he has a self-respect which causes him to seek his highest good.

To love yourself means that you long to keep yourself worthy of your own respect. And the love of God helps to heighten our own self-respect. When we look at ourselves in the light of God's love, we see that we are children of God whom he so loved that he sent his Only begotten Son to save us. We see that, however lowly we may look to others, God sees worth in us. As Browning says:

> All instincts immature,
> All purposes unsure,
> All I could never be,
> All men ignored in me,
> That I was worth to God whose wheel the pitcher shaped.

We can feel that God looks at us somewhat as a certain mother looked at her twelve-year old son. The late Dr. Henry C. Link, the distinguished psychologist, told how this boy kept bringing home report cards with low grades. When his mother admonished him, he replied: "The teacher isn't worrying about me, so why should you? She says that, considering my I.Q., I am doing pretty good work." To this the mother answered, "If your teacher isn't worrying, then it is high time that I was." She went to see the teacher and was told that the boy had an I.Q. of 88. With such mediocre mental equipment the boy seemed to the teacher to be getting along about as well as could be expected.

"That is just what I was afraid of," said the mother. "If you do not expect more of him, no wonder he doesn't do any better. In spite of his I.Q. I expect him to do better, much better. And what is more, I am going to see that he does."

And the mother did. And the boy did.

When God through Christ looks at us, he sees our I.Q.'s and our inequalities, our handicaps and our shortcomings. But he also knows the power of ideals and incentives. Jesus saw, for instance, a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax office and he said to him, "Follow me." Levi's spirit stirred as life stirs in the chrysalis. And Levi winged his way up as a disciple of Christ, becoming Matthew. And today we take our text from the gospel of Saint Matthew. Just think how Christ loved that poor despised tax-gatherer into sainthood.

Or think how he took Saul of Tarsus with his physical handicap and so infused him with spiritual power that he shaped the culture of a continent. Or recall the hunch-back Wilberforce whose frail little frame became so filled with the passion to stop the African slave traffic that he aroused a nation to its abolition.

Thus when we see ourselves in the light of God's love, we get a loftier respect for our own natures and possibilities. We are immortal souls. We are of unmeasured potentiality when we link up with God who is "able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think according to the power that worketh in us."

And this respect for ourselves is our yardstick for measuring our love for our neighbors. As we have regard for the sanctity of our own person, we must have regard for our neighbor's person. As we respect our own freedom, we must safeguard his liberty. As we hold ourselves to be immortal souls, we must treat others with concern for their eternal welfare.

III

And having seen what kind of love

we are to have toward our neighbors, now comes the question, how can we generate such love?

Well, a better acquaintance will often help to increase a friendlier feeling toward our neighbors. Charles Lamb was once at a gathering when there entered the room a man for whom Lamb had long cherished a dislike, although he had never met him. A mutual acquaintance offered to introduce Lamb to this other person. Lamb declined, saying, "No, if I met him I might like him." It does happen that acquaintance will dispel some prejudicial dislike.

Riding on the same commuting trains day after day generates often a friendliness which reaches the stage of first-name greeting. But mere contact on commuting trains does not cement friendships strong enough to stand very severe strain. Let one of the fellow-commuters get some black mark in a business or professional way, and he is likely to be dropped from the group.

Living under the same roof in the same boarding house or hotel does not guarantee close fraternal affection. For a short period in my life I lived in a boarding house. I can remember yet the caustic remarks and critical stares which flashed between tables in that dining room. To be sure, the food rather added to the ill-feeling, but something got on the boarders' nerves. Brotherly love did not reach even to neighboring tables.

Mere knowledge of one another does not insure brotherhood. Cold facts can make cold wars. Mere nearness to one another does not beget affection. Closeness of contact often begets tension. That is one of our troubles in the world today.

Love for those around us must be fused by a family feeling. That is what cements family ties. One of the oft-cited family circles in nineteenth century American history was that of the four Taft brothers in Cincinnati. The four were Charles, Henry, William, and Horace. William Howard Taft, as you all know, became president of the United States. Horace Taft, who became head of Taft School, wrote his memoirs. In his book he said that he had in his possession a letter written by his father to his maternal grandfather at the time of his own birth. In the letter the father wrote that little Willie's nose was out of joint because he did not like the arrival of another brother to share his playthings. But, said the father, we have placated Willie by telling him that if little Horace did not prove a good boy, they would send him to an orphan asylum. Mr. Horace Taft added whimsically, "Of course, I never went to the orphan asylum."

Of course not. And why not? Because the brothers grew up in the atmosphere of parental love. Children absorb the spirit of love from the attitudes, the services, the sacrifices of parents.

Similarly in society brotherhood depends for its renewal and persistence on the atmosphere of a Heavenly Father's love. This is the principle which Jesus stressed when he said: "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven." Jesus counted on the thought of our Heavenly Father's love as the greatest incentive for seeing our neighbors as our brothers, and loving them as ourselves.

And so it proved. The early Christians caught this truth and they said: "Hereby know we love that God first loved us. Herein is love, not that we loved God but that he first loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another."

SURPRISE FOR STATUS SEEKERS

Michael Daves, First Methodist Church, Addison, Texas

"Take up your forks and follow me!" was one of Jesus' invitations, according to a modern-day author. It is true that Jesus was the happy Host at many a meal and a gracious Guest at others. The Gospels record eleven separate instances when Jesus ate. One of the chief criticisms the Pharisees leveled against him was that he "eats with tax collectors and sinners." We have seen Jesus as a man of sorrows acquainted with grief, but the Gospels show that he enjoyed the merriment associated with a meal. Moreover, Jesus saw to it that the meals he attended were occasions for feeding the spirit, as well as the body. He used them as opportunities for evangelism! Let no one make light of the fellowship supper in the modern church, for Jesus set the example.

The background for our text, then, is familiar to Jesus. He was at a meal given by a ruler of the Pharisees. Jesus, who had eaten with tax collectors and sinners, now dined with a Pharisee. Jesus had arrived early and was sitting at the long, low table. Into the room jostled the other guests, each vying to get the seat of honor nearest the host. It was amusing to see grown men pushing ahead of one another in an attempt to get in the spotlight. To be sure, it was bad manners, but Jesus saw more than bad manners. Their status seeking was a symptom of deep spiritual sickness. Thus, he spoke to them a parable which contains the surprise for status seekers:

> "When you are invited by any one to a marriage feast, do not sit down in the place of honor, lest a more eminent man than you be invited by him; and he who invited you both will come to you and say to you, "Give place to this man," and you will begin with shame to take the lowest place. But when you are invited, go and sit in the lowest place so that when your host comes he may say to you, "Friend, go up higher"; then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at table with you. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." (Luke 14:7-11).

The surprise is in that last sentence: "For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." This sounds strange to our ears because we have been immersed in the success philosophy which advises: "You've got to be a pusher to get ahead," "Everyone for himself and the devil take the hindmost," and "You've got to look out for yourself because nobody else will." Jesus is saying something entirely different in our text! "Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled." This is a surprise because the status seeker has never really heard the Gospel. It is a surprise because we have worshiped the success symbols of a sinful society.

Behind these words of Jesus rolls the thunder of judgment. The exalters will be humbled by the Living God himself. Their puffed-up pride will be revealed to be empty. Their pride will be broken asunder. On the other hand, the paradox is that the humble will be exalted. Those who come before God with a broken and contrite heart, pouring contempt on all their pride, will be given places of honor at the Banquet Table of the King.

I

First, let us consider the proud who will be humbled. They arrive at the banquet and strut, not any seat, but the seat of honor. Soon the Host comes and whispers to them, "Give place to this man." Reluctantly—and with red faces—they move to a lowly place. They have suffered the death

of rejection, and for good reason.

The proud who claim the chief seats are in rebellion against God. They take up arms against the Almighty and seek to depose him. This is the best definition of sin: man seeking to be God. The Greeks realized that pride was the root of sin. Their word for pride — "hubris" — is the closest classical Greek equivalent for sin. Scorning service, the proud want only to be served. Milton suggests that the sin of Satan was his desire to reign over God. When thrown from heaven by the God whom he defied, Lucifer announced:

> Here at least
> We shall be free; the Almighty hath not built
> Here for his envy, will not drive us hence;
> Here we may reign secure; and, in my choice
> To reign is worth ambition, though in Hell:
> Better to reign in Hell than to serve in Heaven.

Pride separates us from God because the prideful man refuses to acknowledge Him as the source of life who alone is worthy of our worship and praise. Pride makes idolators of us all because we substitute the worship of self for the worship of God. Pride crucifies love. It blinds our ethical sense so that we cannot distinguish between good and evil. Look at those who crucified Jesus. They were proud men.

The proud who claim the chief seats are also in rebellion against their neighbors. W. G. de Burg wrote of "hubris", the Greek word for pride, "Its root meaning is the violent overstepping of the mark, the insolence of triumph, and the pride of life that tramples underfoot the unwritten laws of gods and men." The proud, like unbriddled wild horses, rush headlong to achieve their selfish ends, trampling their neighbors underfoot as if they were dirt. Ah, success, what sins have been committed in thy name! To get the front desk, the junior executive plots a way to destroy the senior executives. To be elected president of the fraternity, the candidate seeks a way to slander his opponent.. Pride even destroys family relationships when parents are turned against children and children against parents because the windows of the soul are dirty with pride. The status seekers are crippled. They are unable to give and receive love. Their substitute for love is domination. Their requirement for a relationship is the complete submission of the dominated. The proud do not see their neighbors as people to be loved, but as tools to be used. In claiming the chief seats, they push their neighbors to the end of the table. The knife which should be used for eating is plunged into their neighbor's back.

But the Constitution of God is set against the proud. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." "For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled." The proud have rebelled against God and their fellow men. Their fate is spiritual death, unless they repent of their prideful ways.

II

On the other hand, consider the humble who are exalted. They arrive at the banquet, but they do not engage in status seeking. Rather, they realize that it is the Host's responsibility to assign seats. So, they sit in the insignificant seats. But before they are settled, the Host comes with the good invitation, "Friend, go up higher."

The virtue of humility is perhaps the most confused of all virtues. As a matter of fact, humility is often considered a vice. The comic strip "Peanuts" illustrated the popular concept of humility. "Snoopy," the dog, stood up on his hind legs. Charlie Brown asked him if he wanted the rest of his sandwich, adding, "I've already eaten half of it . . . you don't mind?" "Snoopy" licked his chops, so Charlie tossed him the sandwich. As the dog trotted off with the sandwich between his teeth, he thought to him-

self, "I'm so humble it's sickening!" The humble, according to the popular concept, take the leftovers, assent to everything, always turn the cheek and are plain "sickening." Well, there are such anemic people, but they are not humble! They are self-effacing, which is an entirely different trait. Humility is dynamic.

The humble are as strong as steel. Humility, far from a sign of weakness, is an indication of greatest strength. All logic points to strength residing in the proud and self-assured. Yet strength is found in the humble. Like his insane leader, Joseph Goebbels was drunk with pride. In his diary he called Gandhi of India a fool. If Gandhi would organize the forces of India into an army, he might win independence. Nothing, Goebbels predicted, could be gained by a peaceful revolution. But history records that the humility Gandhi displayed in waging a peaceful war was a strength which Nazi Germany did not possess. The world often laughs at the humble. The world would do better to study the way of humility, for the humble win the real victories. "Friend, go up higher!"

The humble are realistic. A synonym for humble is meek. The Hebrew word for meek suggests "being molded." The humble are those who have surrendered themselves to the divine will and those who have seen themselves as finite creatures standing before an Infinite Creator. The humble are being molded by God.

Their realism expresses itself in the recognition that they are not the masters of their fates and the captains of their souls. The humble know that they are absolutely dependent on God for all that they have and for all that they are. Jesus Christ realized this more than anyone else. He was not a status seeker, not a go-getter, not a pusher. His ministry was not built on achieving his own success, but in announcing the coming Kingdom and in doing the will of his Father who sent him. He did not end up in the front office, but on a cold cross. Yet his cross has called men of all ages from serving themselves to serving God. The cold cross, once a symbol of failure, is now the only true symbol of success. It shows that truly those who humble themselves will be exalted.

There is an old story about two men who were climbing a mountain. One was an expert guide and the other was a beginner. When they reached a dangerous precipice where the wind blew with cyclone force, the guide instinctively dropped to his knees and crawled, but the novice tried to make it on his feet. The guide knowing that the wind would blow his friend off any minute, yelled back to him: "Get on your knees, man, get on your knees! You'll never make it up here unless you're on your knees!" Neither will we make it in life unless we are on our knees in humility and obedience.

The Host says, "Give place to this man." Or he invites, "Friend, go up higher." What does the Host say to you?

SUNKEN TREASURE

Herbert E. Richards, First Methodist Church, Boise, Idaho

> But he who received the one talent, went and dug in the ground and hid his Master's money.
>
> Matthew 25:18

Jesus knew the strength of a good story or parable. Parable power is devastating! Without question, Jesus exploded a social cobalt bomb when he infused the personal problems of his fellow seekers with those of the one-talented servant who "went and dug in the ground and hid his Master's money."

Furthermore, this talent-treasure

record is a parable of life — your life and mine — in which we too begin our career of alloted years with talents, money, and skills. We too are given the freedom to invest these talents as we choose. And we too will — as the darkening clouds of life's eclipse boil in the sky — be asked for an accounting.

With one sickle-like cut Jesus laid low the soothsayers of human equality. He made his truth amply clear: all men are not identical. Soothsaying dreamers prattled, "All men are equal." Christ refuted such professions of phantasy. Christ knew and Christ taught that each man and each woman has his or her diverse gifts or talents. While one draws the plans of the cathedral, another carves the stone; still another builds the road to the door, while yet others lead the prayers of the thanksgiving. And whether we are gifted with one talent or five, we risk and invest whatever there is entrusted to our keeping. Without such risk and enterprise there is no progress. There is no Christian dedication.

Men of good will who heed the parable's teaching cannot be content with circumstances as they are. City fathers are aroused to community betterment, national officials are spurred to ennoblement, and church leaders are goaded to advance through social and spiritual adventures. Talent-powered Christians explore untried roads; draw advanced plans, and mature while protecting and inspiring the spiritual enthusiasm of youth. Christians live daily the Columbus spirit — the spirit of the new world — and frequently return to their King bringing new people from the Great Land. Without explorer spirituality, religion becomes religiosity and spiritless communicants die as the insects of yesterday. The beatitude of progress reminds us that: "Blessed are the unsafe for they shall build the Kingdom of God."

Because there is such a limited number of five-talented Lincolns, Lees, Shakespeares, and Schumann-Heinks; and likewise such a dearth of two-talented leaders, one is encouraged to believe that the Bible talent-parable was created for the benefit for us one-talented people of whom there is such an abundance. Scarcely any holy words are spent on the five-talented executive; still less on the two-talented manager; but the one-talented cully lazes in verse after verse until one wonders if he will also hear the charmed words, "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

The Bible lucidly records the fact that the one-talented servant failed, not because his talent was singular, but because he misused and wasted that which was entrusted to his care. He was not alone frustrated; he was also resentful.

I

How many of us face our difficult tasks with a sense of depressing frustation? The failing servant in the scripture use the Biblical equivalent of the phrase, "With my equipment what can I do?" Have you ever heard that phrase? The mechanic who stupidly wrenches the right bolt on the wrong nut blurts, "With the kind of tools they give us, what can I do?" Here is the frustrated log-jam personality of the slothful servant.

A distinguished psychiatrist says, "In thirty-five years of dealing with persons who have this problem of the log-jam personality, almost every one of them could have it broken and directed if he or she would get a religious view of life." When the slothful, frustrated person acquires a perspective on the needs of others, he has achieved the great resource for overcoming his own frustrations.

Marriage is a prime example of this truth. When a husband, upon seeing a problem troubling his wife, offers her his aid, he discovers quickly he has an excellent therapy to aid his own recovery from the heavy-day-at-the-office hangovers.

On the other hand, the wife's most delicate task is to help her husband reach "the top," without having him "hit the ceiling." Frustrated people

are encouraged and helped by one another.

Although some frustrated men and women turn to sorcery and tea leaves, religion gives a person the mature outlook that makes the fortune teller appear as ludicrous as he really is. Montaigne averred, said "No one is exempt from talking nonsense; and that misfortune is magnified when it is done solemnly." Superstition is too much with us! We try God's love by plucking daisy petals.

In the same generation when medicine will announce no "cure" until thousands of patients have verified such a conclusion and hundreds of doctors have concurred, many otherwise intelligent people play phantasy with divine insight, and pluck spiritual and mental daisies.

II

Divorce is a cardinal source of that slothful servant's "thwarted feeling," whether one succumbs to a divorce in marriage or a divorce in life. The divorced man or woman — whether separated from a spouse or from life itself — is overwhelmed by a crushing sense of failure to incite people to want him.

If you carry the frustration of the divorce burden, here are some suggested aids to encourage and to inspire:

One, be willing to examine the divorce burden and frustration and then admit your share of the blame for the broken home or broken world. You get more deeply enmeshed by deceiving yourself that all others are out of step. The very admission of blame-sharing is helpful and therapeutic.

Two, talk the problem over with someone you trust and who reacts unemotionally. The release will give you perspective for facing the future with an inner balance.

Three, while you have breath it is never too late to invest your talent, seek within the limitations of your talents, every outlet of expression, every positive investment in the service of others.

Four, avoid rigidity! Be prepared to reason with an open mind and be willing to modify your convictions when sound counsel is available. No one is always right, even as no one is always wrong.

When your frustrations are viewed through these four windows of technique, the importance of your obstacle is set in focus, perspective returns, and the baffled sense of helplessness vanishes as a shadow before a Palestinian sunrise.

III

The man of limitations is frequently tempted to resent the man of abilities. Such jealousy goaded the slothful servant to slur, "Lord, I knew thee to be a hard man." This resentful attack was simply a smoke-screen for his own weakness.

Do you rejoice in the success of others? Or do you slander your neighbor's progress as "political pull"? To accuse another of "inside influence" often reveals one working out a frustration through the channel of resentment. Unsuccessful business executives excuse their inadequacies by vilifying their competitors. However, no ethical business man has ever been defeated by his competition; the only pressure that ever has defeated him is his own inability to meet the competition with his talents.

Churches have been known to fall prey to human resentment and declare for all to hear that they are the only church, the True Orthodox church, until the protestations of ultimate authority would exhaust a thesaurus of adjectives. Whenever a person or a group of persons accuse another of lacking truth or status, the accuser reveals his inferiority and the accused gains the strength of sympathy and martyrdom.

The success of one influences another to succeed by emulation. If you suffer from the effects of resentment, invest yourself in appreciation. Your neighbor will be prepared and prospered, and you will reap a reward of

contentment and advancement.

One of our nation's greatest scientists was considered a no-talented blockhead, but his life was saved for our world by an understanding father. In a larger sense we of humble talents have been lifted up and given purpose and power by a loving, sacrificing Father. We receive new strength from the resource of the Divine and your one talent or two may be sunken as a cross. The Cross in the soul may be sunken, but it is your treasure indeed.

Blind John Milton wrote:

When I consider how my light
is spent
Ere half my days, in this dark
world and wide,
And that one talent, which is
death to hide,
Lodged with me useless, though
my soul more bent
To serve therewith my Maker,
and present
My true account, lest he returning chide;
"Doth God exact day-labor,
light denied?"
I fondly ask. But Patience, to
prevent
That murmur, soon replies,
"God doth not need
Either man's work or his own
gifts; who best
Bear his mild yoke, they serve
him best: his state
Is kingly; thousands at his
bidding speed,
And post o'er land and ocean
without rest;
They also serve who only stand
and wait."

Milton was forty-four when his blindness became total. It never tarnished his sunken treasure, the Cross in his soul.

If your treasure has been buried, retrieve the Master's talent and build.

BOOKS FOR PULPIT PREACHING from page 2

pretations of the beloved service. (Abingdon Press, pp. 143, $2.50)

A much-needed book, **An Introduction to the Great Creeds of the Church** by Paul T. Fuhrmann brings into meaningful focus the heritage of Christian affirmations. Here are interpreted both credal faith and also the documents of faith and tradition. New appreciations and understandings are provided for those who recite perfunctorily the creeds or who turn from them because of a lack of understanding of their purpose, ideas, and significance. (Westminster Press, 144 pp., $3)

The Essential Nature of New Testament Preaching by Robert H. Mounce ought to be read by every pastor who may wonder concerning the sacramental character of his calling or of the meaning of preaching in the early church. "Standing at the crossroads of time and eternity, (the preacher) has the exalted privilege to prolong in time that mighty redemptive act of God which in one sense belongs to a specific date in the Roman Imperial Age. As he speaks, somehow his words become the Divine Word. He has mediated the presence of God, and to those who respond in faith the Divine Self-disclosure has become an actuality. It is by way of the pulpit that the cycle of revelation is made complete." (Eerdmans, 168 pp., $3.50)

The Church in the Thought of Jesus by Joseph B. Clower, Jr., emphasizes the Hebrew heritage which Jesus received, His relation to Judaism, His awareness of His mission, and His projection of his ministry. The author clarifies the understanding and experience upon which a valid doctrine of the church may be contemplated. (John Knox Press, 160 pp., $3.50)

CHARLES L. SEASHOLES
CHARLES L. ALLEN
HOMER J. R. ELFORD
CLARENCE EDWARD MACARTNEY

FORGIVING AND BEING FORGIVEN

FORGIVE US AS WE FORGIVE

Charles L. Seasholes, First Baptist Church, Dayton, Ohio

In the Lord's Prayer the petition "Give us" is immediately followed by "Forgive us." As basic as the need for daily bread is the need for daily forgiveness. The full petition is "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." This seems to say that God will forgive us only as we forgive others. Another passage seems to say it even more directly and strongly, the parable of the unjust servant who, having been forgiven a large amount by his lord and master, refused to forgive another person a small amount owed him. The once kindly lord and master cast him into prison, and Jesus said, "Even so will my heavenly Father do unto you if you forgive not your brother from the heart."

I

This parable, as all parables, if transferred character for character and quality for quality, into the spiritual realm, may give rise to some misconceptions which we must clear away. The first would be that God holds out arbitrarily on us in this matter of forgiveness unless we forgive others. It is not as if God said abruptly: "Have you forgiven so-and-so? Then get out of here and don't come back until you have."

A second misconception would be that forgiving others is something we can hold out to God as a basis for His forgiving us. Suppose the servant, before he went to be forgiven the large amount, had suddenly thought of the small amount owed to him by someone else and said to himself, "I'll just take care of that and write it off, and then I'll be in a better position to ask for what I want." It is not that at all. "Nothing in my hand I bring," not even the forgiving of others can be used as a basis or bid for God's forgiveness.

The misconception that is the basis for all such misconceptions is that of thinking of forgiveness in transactional terms at all. Of course the langauge used literally lends itself to that, whether you say "debts" or "trespasses." Tyndale took the word "trespasses" from the following verse of explanation, and put it over into the Lord's Prayer. The Book of Common Prayer followed him, and others who use 'debts" follow the King James Version. Forgiveness is in the realm of personal relationships and is to be understood in terms of a vital organic process. The flow of God's love and grace into our lives must then become the flow through our lives into other lives. Forgiveness then is a matter of what will permit that flow and what impedes it.

II

Repentance is what will permit this flow into our own lives. Repentance is not mentioned explicitly in the Lord's Prayer, but it is in there implicitly in our asking for forgiveness. That is meaningful only as we acknowledge that we need it. What impedes the flow is rationalizing or just explaining our wrong-doing away to ourselves. We do what Al Simmons once did in protesting a called strike on him when he said, "Sure, it was a strike, but I had to make myself look good, didn't I?" So we try to make ourselves look good instead of acknowledging that we are in the wrong.

We say that we were the victim of circumstances, or that others were responsible for what we are and what we do, or that someone is trying to make us own up to something we

didn't really do at all. Rationalizing will not do as a substitute for repentance. It is not that "Our Father" will accept the one and reject the other. God could conceivably forgive us without our repenting, and we could take it over externally. But forgiveness is not obtaining something on the outside; it is experiencing something on the inside. Repentance is receptiveness to the flow of God's love and grace, and rationalizing is nonreceptiveness.

But God does not just wait passively for our rationalizing to break down and our repentance to allow His love and grace to come in. His love is always an insistent pressure upon us to throw open the gate and allow the experience of grace and forgiveness to come. "Thy love unknown has broken every barrier down."

III

The second part of this organic process is that the flow of God's grace and love into our lives, unimpeded by rationalizing and released by our repentance, must flow on into our lives in our forgiveness of *them*. Reluctance or refusal to forgive others will cause a backing up of the flow of God's grace into our own lives. William Manson said, "The clause 'as we forgive,' states not the ground on which God bestows forgiveness, but the ground on which men receive it."

But, you say, suppose the barrier is not inside us, but inside them? If God's forgiveness of me is dependent upon my repenting, is not my forgiveness of others dependent on their repenting, and do not they often erect a barrier at that point?

But we must make sure that it is really not inside us, this barrier, and that we really want them to repent. Jonah preached God's punishment to the people of Nineveh unless they would repent, and then his peevishness when they did repent showed that he hoped they would not.

If, however, there is something in others by which they cannot receive our forgiveness, we can still grant it where we cannot bestow it because the opportunity or attitude on their part is wanting. But as with God's overcoming our resistance, so our forgiveness of *others* already in our hearts may in some way communicate itself to them and bring them to the condition where they can truly receive it. In this case our love unknown will break every barrier down.

IV

What about forgiving and forgetting? Often someone will say, "I can forgive, but I cannot forget." Of course we cannot wipe out recollection, even when we forgive. Indeed, forgiving will heighten recollection because we give new attention to what has been done to us. But when somebody says he can forgive but cannot forget, he often means by that he's unwilling to forget, and that means there are qualifications in his forgiving which make it incomplete or insincere. MacIntosh tells of a man who called for an old enemy of his to come to see him when he was on his deathbed and shook hands with him in forgiveness. But as the friend left the man said, "But remember, if I get well, the old quarrel stands." Abe Martin, the comic character, said, "Nobody ever fergits where he buried a hatchet."

Just as to forgive and not forget is wrong, so to forget and not forgive is bad. Sometimes we just get tired of our resentment and pass it over or skip it, but to forget and not to forgive, Gerald Heard reminds us, when the wrong is fresh and keen, is simply to let an infected wound heal on the surface. It will break out *again*. There is an experience of forgiving others which does not wipe out recollection, but remembers what has occurred with a totally *different* evaluation upon it.

V

All these blocks in the stream of grace and love and forgiveness bear different names, but they are all one thing—pride. Pride is always first in the lists of the deadly sins, because it is the source of the others. It is

pride that makes us rationalize away our wrongdoing instead of repenting of it. It is pride that is the root of resentment or refusal to forgive others. It is also pride that makes us refuse to admit we have been wronged or hurt. It is better to acknowledge these things that do hurt us, especially in family or clan or friendship; otherwise, what is unacknowledged, one way or the other will often be the poison within our systems that cause distress and even psychosomatic illness. Wholeness of life depends upon the free and unimpeded flow of love and grace into our hearts and from our hearts to others.

How can we make this whole process start with new power? It has well been said that the forgiving of others is one of the most difficult things when we just think about it and try to figure out how it can be reconciled with justice and other values. But when we act upon it and do forgive, when "the message of reconciliation is sent, the word of pardon spoken, the look exchanged, and the hand grasped," then what seems to be impossible is real, and what might have seemed immoral is caught up into a whole new relationship in which no wrongdoing is treated lightly or condoned, but everything is overcome by God's grace and love in us and through us, and a new experience, a new situation comes into being. So forgiveness creates the conditions upon which it depends, when we act.

VI

Such a new starting of the whole process was what took place historically in the outgoing and outgiving of God's love and grace in Jesus Christ, and especially in His act and words of forgiveness on the Cross.

"Free to all, a healing stream
Flows from Calvary's mountain."

All of this was not a great transaction, as one hymn puts it, but a new transfusion that brought into our world of enmities and reprisals a new power which would make forgiveness possible and right by creating new situations and new people.

Christianity has a code word in this matter of forgiveness. The Apostle Paul knew it and used it. When he found among the Ephesians malice and strife and bitterness and evil-speaking, he suddenly called out, 'Calvary! Calvary!" It was the code word! The words he actually used were: "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor and evil speaking be put away from you with all malice. And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

Calvary is our code word, for

"When we survey the wondrous cross . . . we pour contempt on all our pride, the pride that keeps us through rationalizing from the repentonce by which we can receive God's forgiveness, the pride that keeps us by resentment from refusing to forgive others. Calvary is also the compelling power by which we will truly pray, "Forgive us as we forgive."

FORGIVENESS CAN BE YOURS

Charles L. Allen, First Methodist Church, Houston, Texas

Against thee, thee only, have I sinned. Psalm 51:4

Clarence E. Macartney tells of a headstone in a cemetery not far from New York upon which there is just one word inscribed. That one word is "Forgiven." There is no name, no date of birth or death. The stone is unembellished by the sculptor's art. There is no epitaph, no eulogy. Just that one word "Forgiven."

Whoever was responsible for that headstone showed rare insight. Because when we come to the hour of

death, that is really the only word which matters. Where and when we were born, what honors we received on earth, even a person's name, are of secondary importance. Man at last comes to the place where position, fame, money and good works are insufficient. The forgiveness of God stands above and beyond all things else.

As Jesus was lifted on the cross, His first act was a prayer. That does not surprise us because prayer was the habit of His life. He prayed before every decision of His life and in this black and desperate hour we would have been surprised if He had not first prayed. Even those who never think of prayer when the blessings of God are being poured out upon them and when life is sunny and fair, instinctively turn to prayer when some tragedy pulls away their supports and the ground beneath them begins to give way.

But the prayer Jesus prayed is surprising to some. He prayed not for His own deliverance. "Father, forgive them," He prayed. The greatest need He saw at that moment was the forgiveness of those about Him. And if I stood before Him today and said, "Lord, pray for me the prayer I most need," He would pray that same prayer for me. I may need many things, but forgiveness is by far my greatest need.

Not only am I impressed with the fact that forgiveness would be the very first prayer of Christ for me, but also am I impressed with the complete confidence with which He prays that prayer. A few nights before, He had knelt in Gethsemane to pray. That night he begins His prayer with "If." He is not sure it can be answered. "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me." But on the cross He does not say, "If forgiveness is possible." He is confident it is.

So, we begin with two vital thoughts: (1) My first and greatest need is forgiveness. (2) Forgiveness is possible for me. Frequently into my study on a busy thoroughfare in a great city comes one confessing some awful sin and hopelessly saying, "After what I have done, there is no hope for me." Then I point out those who crucified Christ, who drove the nails, gambled for his clothes, spit on his body with ridicule and vile criticism, and yet Our Lord declares they can be forgiven.

Whatever my sin might be, when I come seeking forgiveness, I come in full confidence that I can find it.

I

The ground of our Lord's complete sureness of forgiveness is the very act He was committing as He prayed "Father, forgive them." Why did Jesus die? What is the meaning of the cross? It has been said that His death was that of a martyr. A martyr is one who sacrifices his life for a cause, and one who puts certain principles above life itself. Long before, Plato had taught that such would be the fate of any perfectly holy man in this wicked world. Christ was a martyr, but He was much more.

We might say that our Lord's death was an example. We cannot expect to reach our highest possible life without sacrifice. We should be willing to suffer for what we believe and to give our time, money, efforts, even our very lives to advance the higher cause.

We sing,

> But drops of grief can ne'er repay
> The debt of love I owe . . .
> Here, Lord, I give myself away—
> 'Tis all that I can do.

All that is true, but it does not explain the cross.

Again, it is said that on the cross Jesus revealed the love of God. Someone tells of being on the deck of a ship one dark night. Suddenly he heard a roar in the distance and a great volcano began erupting great sheets of fire. It became as light as day, driving away the darkness of the night. Then the volcano died down. But for a few moments was revealed the fire which is forever burning in the heart of the mountain. So, as we see Jesus on the cross, we see revealed

the love of God. That is true but it is not the whole truth.

Others see Christ dying on the cross for the purpose of moving men to gratitude and thereby to repentance. Surely no person can look at the cross without being moved by it. Sometimes parents say to children, "See how much I have sacrificed for you, therefore, you ought to appreciate it and be a better child."

We might go on with possible explanations of the cross of Christ, but they would all fall short. The fact is that on the cross, our Lord goes on past human understanding. But of one thing we are sure: some mighty deed was accomplished that day on Calvary that forever makes a difference in the relationship of man to God. Exactly what that mighty deed was, I cannot explain. I can only accept it by faith.

The great transactions of Christ on the cross go beyond all comparison of human action and human thought. But because Christ understood His own cross, He confidently prays even for the vilest of sinners, knowing their forgiveness is possible. And as I see Him die, I can sing with Charles Wesley,

> My God is reconciled;
> His pardoning voice I hear;
> He owns me for His child,
> I can no longer fear.

II

Maybe this modern generation has lost the word sin, yet no generation has been more conscious of the fact that something is wrong with us and that something needs to be done. But we are a conceited people and we have been dazzled by our own accomplishments. "The difficult we do immediately, the impossible takes a little longer," seems to sum up our attitude.

So we have set out on a vast program of self-salvation. Witness the ever-increasing stream of these "self-help" books and their amazing sale. Walk through the book store and before you will be such titles as "You Can Change The World," "How to Stop Worrying and Start Living," "The Power of Relaxation," "The Anatomy of Happiness," "How To Develop Your Thinking Ability," "The Power of Positive Living," etc. Most of those books I have read and have found to be of help.

But that philosophy that man has within him the power to save himself is wrong and ultimately it fails. We are told to keep busy, to take a vacation, to serve our fellow men, to live a high moral life, to forgive ourselves and forget the past. Such a program miserably fails because it misunderstands the very first principle of wrong. Sin cannot be described as being personal maladjustment or anti-social. Sin is against God. "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned," cried David.

Because sin is against God, only God can forgive sin. No man can forgive himself until first he is forgiven of God. In the long, long ago men realized that only heaven can cleanse the stains of earth. So, from the beginning of recorded history, all people have built an altar in some form. While many of the altar sacrifices of ancient man seem crude, even repulsive to many today, yet there is a lot more sense and less superstition in the crudest of altars than in our naive efforts of self-salvation.

Let us never forget that through thousands of years the altar has been a success. However, the great enemy of the altar is human pride. The altar stands for helplessness and surrender, and we who have conquered large areas of nature and have built for ourselves a multiplicity of mechanical devices are reluctant to admit that we are helpless to save ourselves. We are swapping God for gadgets and the gadgets have miserably failed us. Instead of saving us, our modern science is becoming our destruction.

The prophet of old knew nothing of H-bombs that can destroy an entire city with one awful blast, but he knew something about God and God's law that our modern pride has blocked from our sight. He heard God saying,

"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."

Every Sunday night I give an opportunity to pray at the altar. I know one can pray sitting in the pew, even walking down the street, but the very act of coming to the altar and kneeling is a rebuke to pride and a recognition of man's helplessness to save himself. We must keep the altar.

Forgiveness does not mean that the suffering for sin is remitted. Clovis Chappell tells of a woman dying of bichloride of mercury self-administered. She said: "I am sorry now. I realize I have done wrong. Will God forgive me?" Dr. Chappell talked to her of forgiveness through faith in Him who "was wounded for our transgressions." He is confident that she accepted that salvation and was forgiven. Nevertheless, forgiveness did not save her from death. Though one is forgiven of sin, many times the suffering for that sin continues.

III

Forgiveness is something far greater and more wonderful than a punishment escape mechanism. It is the restoration of fellowship with God. The awfulness of sin is that it separates us from God. Forgiveness means our relationship with Him is as though the sin had never happened.

"I am the vine, ye are the branches," said our Lord. "He that abideth in me, and I in him the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch and is withered. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."

That is it! Instead of being cut off and withering, through forgiveness one becomes actually a part of God, as the branch is a part of the vine, and God's marvelous, unlimited power becomes ours. We begin to share His divine nature; we become like Him. Defeat, fear, frustration no longer are at home within us. God in us drives them out.

It had been well pointed out that Longfellow could take a worthless sheet of paper, write a poem on it, and make it worth $6,000. That is genius. Rockefeller could sign his name on a check and make it worth millions. That is capital. A machinist can take a piece of steel and make of it an article of usefulness. That is skill.

An artist can take an ordinary piece of canvas, paint a picture on it and make it immortal. That is art. God can take a sinful, failing life, wash it with the blood of Christ, put His spirit on it, and make that life a saint. That is salvation.

TO FORGIVE IS TO LIVE

Homer J. R. Elford, Trinity Methodist Church, Youngstown, Ohio

> But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you. Matthew 5:44.

This fragment from the Sermon on the Mount reminds us that forgiving others is one of the hallmarks of the Christian religion. We not only have Jesus' teaching on the subject, but more impressively, His example. However much we may argue about the impracticability of this philosophy; however hard we may find it to live up to, the fact stands that this is the standard which Jesus set up for His followers and which He lived up to until the very end.

There are very few people who

would have difficulty giving us many reasons why this matter of forgiving one's enemies is one of the hardest things which the Christian is ever called upon to do. When people invade the sacred precincts of our lives with their lives, taking from us some of the most cherished elements of our very personality; when thieves enter our homes and steal our most prized possessions; when forces of evil, either of a personal or impersonal nature, overrun our community and rob us of things which are decent, there is something about our very natures which makes us bristle and want to retaliate. But even when we personalize these acts against us and think of the many things which people do to us which bring us not only unhappiness but real injury, we have to admit that there are consequences which have to be borne by those who fail to forgive. We have found out through deep pain to the heart that resentment, grudge-bearing, and vindictiveness are also hard loads to bear.

Dr. Fosdick reminds us that wherever we turn in today's world we find people who look guardedly and vengefully at one another across barriers of old mistakes; some of them are mistakes which have never been acknowledged, but are still being defended; some are mistakes that no one has ever attempted to straighten out, but all of them are keeping people on edge with one another simply because there is no forgiveness. He writes, "Sometimes in the confessional, when a life is opened to me, a sad sight is displayed—remembered discourtesies, hostilities and ingratitudes are everywhere; innumerable rankling grudges infest the mind; open a door anywhere, and, behold, a resentment! How many people are habitually peeved, piqued, nettled, miffed, provoked, irritated and incensed!" And it is because we allow ourselves to carry these loads which forgiveness alone could lift from our shoulders that we are not as happy as we could be and, therefore, do not live at our very best. That is why we say that to forgive is to live.

It is a fact, borne out by stacks of case studies, that resentment, grudges, and the guilt which invariably is present in such lives, have a definite effect upon physical as well as mental and spiritual health. After citing the reports of outstanding scientists who have given years doing research on the subject, Dr. Carroll A. Wise summarizes by saying, "The emotions which underlie various disease symptoms have been identified by investigators as hatred and resentment, guilt and shame and anxiety." Later he writes: "The least important factor in a given illness may be the organ affected. The most important may be a life experience creating emotional tension.

Even if there were not such an abundance of proof that resentment often contributes to physical illness, we could speak out of our own experience. If we are at all sensitive to the finer human relationships, we know that when we fail to forgive someone we have a hard time eating and sleeping.

We know how Edwin Markham felt as long as he carried a grudge against that banker who had violated his trust and left Markham penniless at an age when he should have been thinking of retirement. Try as he would, the celebrated poet just couldn't write any more poetry. We are told that he sat at his desk with pencil in hand, drawing circles on a piece of paper, trying to write, but unable to make anything come. But then it came to him, "I've got to forgive him, or I shall die!" So, looking at the circles which his subconscious mind had urged him to draw, he thought of the great encircling, forgiving love of God and then said, audibly, "I forgive him!" Having forgiven his friend he wrote:

> He drew a circle that shut
> me out;
> Heretic, rebel, a thing to
> flout,
> But love and I had the wit

to win:
We drew a circle and took
him in.

Then, with the resentment washed out of his soul, Markham began to write again and during the next twenty years penned his greatest masterpieces.

There are some very definite reasons why each one of us should be concerned about this matter of forgiving each people.

This bearing of grudges, can wreak havoc with our own health and happiness—our very life. Dr. Sockman tells of standing one cold March day at the edge of Niagara Falls. The great cataract was garbed in her most glorious winter garments. The rapids above the falls sparkled in the afternoon sun. Some birds were swooping down to snatch a drink from the clear water. A friend told Dr. Sockman how he had seen birds carried over the brink. They had dipped down for a drink and ice had formed on their wings. They had dipped for another drink and more ice had weighted their little bodies. Another dip or two and they could not rise. Over the falls they went.

Not a thrilling picture to envision, but one which is inescapably true in many realms. Rather enjoying the sensation of being miffed at someone over something which we admit was really of no consequence, we too often coddle that miff until it becomes a resentment, then a hatred and finally it pulls us over the brink with disastrous results.

We have known situations in which people, carrying some unforgiven thing with them for years have failed to speak to their relatives, to next door neighbors, or to their business partners; people who have attended the same church or belonged to some club, but failed really to experience the joy of living, simply because they would not forgive. They have insisted that they be excused from parties or committees "if that person is going to be present!" Sometimes these situations have led to tragic consequences of homicide or suicide.

The question which confronts us is this: What shall we do when we find it hard to forgive?

I

For one thing, let us always make sure that we have some good reason for feeling "hurt"; some reason for not wanting to forgive. Let us make sure that some real "wrong" has been committed. In all too many instances feelings are hurt and grudges born out of false reports or a failure to get all the facts. "She said, that she said, that they said . . ." How much injury has been done by those two words, "They say." Let's track down the rumor and make sure of our ground.

Sometimes, too, we assume that someone has intentionally injured us when, as a matter of fact, it was an accident of the first order. Often we allow these feelings of resentment to build up over something which actually has not harmed us, but has only scuffed our egos or our pride. Too often we have been guilty of wearing our feelings on our sleeves. Time may prove that what was said or done was actually a just criticism and if we had been wise, and less temperamental, we would have taken it as something which would help us to grow into bigger, better people. There are many times when it would have been well if we had been "slow to anger" and "of great mercy." The old Indian mottor will stand us in good stead: "Never judge another until you have walked a fortnight in his moccasins." Too seldom do we know the load which others are carrying in their hearts; the long road which they have had to travel.

II

Of a part with this is the need for us to make sure that the person against whom we hold our grudge is allowed to have a chance to make things right and certainly we should be sure that he is fully aware of what he has done which we feel has injured us. Granted that usually those who hurt our feelings or who have done us some real injury have plenty of

knowledge of it, but there are many instances wherein we harbor feelings of resentment against people who are quite unaware of what is going on.

Long ago someone said, "Never let the sun go down on a misunderstanding." He knew that such matters have a way of snowballing; gaining in size and momentum until they are very hard to stop, and it is well to "nip them in the bud." Those who follow such advice often save themselves untold mental and spiritual, as well as physical, anguish.

III

Then, too, we must want to straighten out our differences and misunderstandings and be willing to accept the verdict of truth as it finally appears.

Recall the story which has its setting somewhere in the upper reaches of the great Alpine tract where in a fertile valley lived some Mennonites. True to their religious convictions, these people were non-resistant, law-abiding and peace-loving. These folk were farmers, tillers of the soil. They were as a family of brothers living together, each mindful not only of his own interests but equally of the interests of others.

One day a misunderstanding arose between two neighbors concerning their boundary line. They discussed the matter and tried in every way to come to a proper agreement. But they failed to agree, and rather than allow any ill feeling among themselves, they decided to refer to the court and abide by its decision. The day for the trial arrived and the farmer who lived farthest away, called David, came by where he found John, the other, hilling his potatoes. "Come, John," said David, "let us go to the court." "These potatoes will suffer if they are not hilled today," replied John. "You go to the court and tell the story. You know all about our differences and can tell them as well as I. First put your side before the court, and then mine. Stop on your way home and tell me the verdict."

So David went on alone, down the mountain side into the valley where the court held forth. That evening at dusk David came plodding back up the mountain path. "Well, brother," he said, as John came to meet him half way, "I went to the court and put both sides before them and the court decided in your favor." And David went on his way humming a folk melody.

There must be something of that spirit of eagerness to come to an understanding and willingness to arrive at the truth, if we are to be free of the deadening effect of grudge-bearing. Like those Mennonites we must know that to forgive is to live; to fail to forgive is to labor under the shadow of misunderstanding which soon brings on the darkness of hatred, quarreling and death.

IV

We have left till now one of the most important reasons why every person should forgive. Not only does an unforgiving spirit harm our own personal health and sense of well-being and spoil our relationships with the people with whom we must live, but it ruins our relationship with God.

The point of our relationship to God is an inward, spiritual thing. That is what we acknowledge when we pray, "Almighty God, unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid . . ." We may go through the outward form of worship even with hearts that bear ill will toward our brother man, but it does us no good. For God looks upon the hearts and motives of men. And when our spirits are bitter with resentment and grudges toward others, our attempted adoration of God is an empty effort. Jesus said, "First be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." God, who looks upon our hearts, knows that unless we get ourselves right with people, we cannot be right with Him.

Jesus was never more specific in stating the laws of spiritual dynamics than at this point as He said, "Except ye forgive those who trespass against you, neither will your Father

in heaven forgive you your trespasses." It is not that God is one who drives a hard bargain; it is simply one of the inescapable laws of life, that we can't enter into oneness with God while we are at odds with the fellow creatures of God with whom we must live.

AN UNFORGIVING SPIRIT

Clarence Edward Macartney, formerly pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Ye ought rather to forgive him . . . lest Satan should get an advantage of us.
II Corinthians 2:7, 11

The offender of whom Paul is speaking is, no doubt, the same person whose gross transgression against the moral law, and apparently, too, against Paul himself, had occasioned the writing of the First Letter to the Corinthians. In that letter, sent by Titus, Paul had required the Church at Corinth to take steps to discipline the offender and uphold the purity of the Church. Paul was in great distress about the situation in the Church at Corinth, and particularly with reference to this offender. But, at length, somewhere in Macedonia, Titus came to him with the good news that the Church had carried out his instructions, disciplined the offender, and that the latter had acknowledged his transgression.

This brought to Paul great joy, such great joy that he likened it to a Roman triumph, and says, "Thanks be unto God which always causeth us to triumph in Christ." Now the Apostle's thought is for the welfare of the transgressor, and he writes the Second Letter to the Church at Corinth, telling them that they must forgive this offender and deal kindly with him, lest the man should be "swallowed up with sorrow," which means overcome with despair, and lest also Satan should get an advantage of them.

The whole incident, and what Paul says here, is a beautiful example of the Christian spirit of forgiveness, and also, in a very striking phrase, an illustration of the injury which an unforgiving spirit does to the soul. "Lest Satan should get an advantage over us." Satan has gained his point, and has secured a strong hold on a man's life when he gets him into that state of mind where he is unwilling to forgive one who has wronged him or done him evil. There are many things which hinder us in the Christian life, but perhaps there is no hindering which is so heavy, and which drags us down and behind in the Christian life as the weight of an unforgiving spirit.

I

The importance of this matter of forgiveness, and the danger of harboring an unforgiving spirit, is made clear by the repeated references to it in the teachings of Christ and the New Testament. Indeed, so much is this so that today, if one says a man has a Christian spirit, it does not mean that he is a generous man, or an honest man, or a chaste man, or a man who controls his passions, but a man who is ready and able to forget an injury and forgive a wrong. What are the alternatives to forgiveness? The answer to this shows us the influence of an unforgiving spirit, for the alternatives to forgiveness, are grudge-bearing, vindictiveness, bitterness, and hatred. Some people say they have trouble believing in Satan. If so, a bitter, unforgiving spirit is one of the best witnesses to the power of Satan in man's soul.

In his "Picturesque Notes of Edinburgh," Robert Louis Stevenson tells of two spinster sisters who had a falling out, and thenceforth no word was ever spoken between them. Yet, either

because of lack of means, or fear of scandal, they continued to live together in the same house. A chalk line on the floor separated their two domains. "It bisected the doorway and the fireplace, so that each could go out and in, and do her cooking, without violating the territory of the other's." So through the years they lived together, and yet separated, within the four walls of that home. That visible and invisible chalk line separated them in their household and kitchen toil, in their devotions, in their hours of reading, and in the silent watches of the night. No one could ever describe that as a happy life. The chalk line of an unforgiving spirit separates and isolates multitudes of souls.

Some of the savage tribes of Africa weigh themselves down with the heavy pendants of brass or iron which they wear on their ears, their noses, and their necks. Those heavy pendants are like the grudges, enmities, and feelings of anger and revenge with which men and women weight themselves down on the long pilgrimage of life. Hannah More used to say that if she wanted to punish an enemy she would teach him to hate somebody. Boswell, the famous biographer of Samuel Johnson, had a falling out with his father, and then was reconciled to him. When Johnson heard of this he wrote Boswell, as follows: "I had great pleasure in hearing that you were at last on good terms with your father. Life is but short. No time can be afforded but for the indulgence of real sorrow, or contests upon questions seriously momentous. Let us not throw away any of our days upon useless resentment, or contend who shall hold out longest in stubborn malignity. It is best not to be angry, and best in the second place to be quickly reconciled."

When Leonardo da Vinci was painting his great picture, "The Last Supper," he had a quarrel with a rival painter and determined to revenge himself by painting this rival's face into the face of Judas. This he did with no little satisfaction. But when he came to paint the face of Jesus he was unable to produce a portrait that satisfied him. Something was always wrong with it. Finally he decided that the trouble was in himself, and in his hatred for his rival painter. He sought out this rival, was reconciled to him, and then painted the face of Jesus in a way which the world still admires. Figuratively speaking, we cannot paint the face of Christ if in our hearts there is the spirit of unforgiveness. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me"

Another, and still more serious, effect of an unforgiving spirit upon the unforgiving soul is that it cancels and forfeits God's forgiveness. If we harbor an unforgiving spirit, we break down and demolish the very bridge to heaven over which we ourselves must pass. The Apostle tells us to be tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us. And our Lord taught us to pray, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." That principle of forgiveness in order that we might receive forgiveness, Jesus repeatedly taught and emphasized. In the Sermon on the Mount He said that the man who was bringing a gift to the altar at the temple, and there remembered that he had a falling out with his brother, should leave his gift before the altar, and then go his way and first be reconciled to his brother and then come and offer his gift. Thus Jesus taught that a forgiving spirit is a condition of true worship and prayer.

But the most extended and most striking utterance of Jesus on this subject was the great parable of the Two Debtors. Peter had asked Jesus, "Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Till seven times?" The answer of Jesus to this was, "Not until seven times, but until seventy times seven." That is, repeated and unlimited forgiveness. And then to show the danger of an unforgiving spirit, he related the

parable of the Two Debtors. There was one servant who owed his Lord ten thousand talents, an enormous sum, amounting to millions of dollars. According to the law and custom of the day, his Lord commanded that he and his family should be sold into slavery, and thus, at least, a part of the debt be paid. Whereupon, the servant fell down before his master and said, "Lord, have patience with me and I will pay thee all." That, of course, was impossible. Though he should live to be as old as Methusaleh he could never hope to pay this huge debt which he had incurred, probably through dishonesty. But his Lord was moved with compassion, and, setting him free, forgave him the debt.

With a light heart, this servant, whose enormous debt had been forgiven, went out from the presence of his lord and down the steps of the palace on to the street. There he chanced to meet one of his fellow servants who owed him a trifling sum, a hundred pence. Taking him by the throat, he shook him and said, "Pay me that thou owest!" His fellow servant fell down at his feet and besought him to have mercy in the very same words with which he had besought his lord. "Have patience with me and I will pay thee all." But the hard-hearted servant, forgetting how his own great debt had just been forgiven him, cast the man and his family into prison.

There is a great deal in the world of what Pope called "man's inhumanity to man." But, thank God, there is also a great deal of man's humanity to man. The other servants in this king's household heard of this harsh and cruel treatment, visited upon the man who owed the one hundred pence, "and they were sorry." They were sorry. Compassion is the fountain and impulse back of all noble action. They were not only sorry, but they acted upon their sorrow, and told their lord what had taken place. Whereupon, the king summoned the first debtor and said to him, "O thou wicked servant! I forgave thee all that debt because thou desiredest me. Shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow servant, even as I had pity on thee?" Having thus rebuked him, his lord delivered him over to the jailors and tormentors till he should pay all that was due unto him. Then Jesus draws the point of his sermon, and how clear and unmistakable it is: "So likewise shall my Heavenly Father do unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not everyone his brother their trespasses."

II

We have seen the blighting and withering effect of and unforgiving spirit. Now let us look on the other side. There is, first of all, the possible influence and effect upon the one who is forgiven. The Roman Catholic doctrine of no divorce claims for authority, not only the teaching of our Lord, but also the spirit of that teaching, for one of the reasons given is that a legal separation puts a barrier in the way of forgiveness and reconciliation. In other passage, and immediately after he had related the beautiful parable of the Ninety and Nine and the One Lost Sheep, Jesus spoke of a dispute between brothers, and said that the one who felt that he had been wronged, before breaking off relationship with his brother, and before bringing him before the court of the Church, should endeavor in a private interview to be reconciled unto him, saying, "If he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother."

In a powerful book of fiction which came out a generation and more ago, a man who had committed a crime so contrived it that suspicion fell upon another and innocent man, who was tried, convicted, and sent to prison. The guilty man remained free. Yet he was visited by many calamities—sickness, death in the family, and financial loss. Yet none of these things brought him to repentance or turned him back to God. But one day he got a message from the dying man whom he had wronged. It was a message of forgiveness. Up to that

time he had said, "I cannot, I will not, I dare not, I must not repent." But now the letter of forgiveness broke his heart and brought him to repentance. "God called me" he said, "through many years, by many judgments; but I repented not until I was forgiven."

"In "Quo Vadis," that great tale of early Christian history, Chilo, the philosopher, thief, and betrayer of the innocent, had sold the wife and daughter of his friend Glaucus into slavery, and had tried to kill Glaucus for his faith in Christ. When Nero passed down the lines of human agony in the Vatican Gardens, where the pitch-covered Christians were burning at the pillars to which they had been bound, Chilo walked by his side. As the wind for a moment blew the smoke away from the fact of Glaucus, Chilo, smitten with remorse, stretched his arms up towards the agonizing martyr and cried out, "Glacus, in Christ's name, forgive me!" At that the head of the martyr moved slightly, and from the top of the pillar was heard a voice like a groan, "I forgive." Immediately, Chilo, turning towards Nero, lifted an accusing hand and said, "There is the incendiary!" The same day he was baptized into the Christian faith; and when his torturers were binding him and piercing him with iron tongs, Chilo kissed their hands with forgiveness. Forgiven himself, he had learned to forgive—and he died in peace.

In the National Gallery in London, and in other galleries, you will see many of the beautiful paintings of the great portrait painter, George Romney. At the age of nineteen, Romney impulsively married a young woman who nursed him through a fever. Then, having heard another great painter, Sir Joshua Reynolds, say that marriage spoiled an artist, he deserted his wife and two children and went to London to seek fame as a painter. The one who inspired many of his portraits, and whom he painted into a score or more of his characters, such as St. Cecilia, the Magdalene, and Joan of Arc, was the beautiful, but notorious, Emma Hart, afterwards Lady Hamilton, at whose feet Lord Nelson cast away his honor. In his old age, near the end of his life, desolate and almost out of his mind, he went back to the wife he had deserted long years before who received him and nursed him until he died. In "Romney's Remorse," after a friend had tried to comfort him in his remorse with the thought that, regardless of the low part he had played in life, he had, at least, won the painter's fame, Romney replied:

> The best in me that sees the worst in me,
> And groans to see it, finds no comfort there.

But what he does find comfort in is the hope that the heavenly forgiveness which his wife has shown him may be granted him of heaven:

> O yes, I hope, or fancy, that perhaps
> Human forgiveness touches heaven, and thence—
> For you forgive me, you are sure of that—
> Reflected sheds a light on the forgiven.

And that, indeed, is one of the great blessings for forgiveness. It sheds the reflected light of heaven upon the soul of the one who has sinned.

Not only does the forgiving spirit bless him who receives forgiveness, but it blesses him who bestows it. Forgiveness, like mercy, it is twice blessed, "It blesses him that gives and him that takes." Forgiveness is the fruit of faith, and in the great examples of forgiveness which we have in the Bible, that is always brought out and emphasized. It was David's faith in God, and in the destiny which God had appointed him, that enabled him to forgive Saul the great injury he had done him, and hold back his hand from vengeance when repeatedly he had the opportunity; and, at length, when Saul and Jonathan had fallen in battle, to commemorate them with his beautiful ode.

It was faith, too, and not mere sentiment, that enabled Joseph to forgive his brothers the great wrong which they had done him, and done his father also, when they had sold him into slavery. When his brothers, after the death of Jacob, were fearful that now he would wreak his vengeance upon them, Joseph said to them, "Fear not, for am I in the place of God?" As for you, ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good." The wrongs and injuries which men suffer in life are not accidental, but providential; and have in them great benefit for the soul, if we can take them as Joseph did, and say that God meant them unto good. The seaworm perforates the shell of the mussel, or the oyster, but the mussel retaliates by closing the hole made by its enemy with the lustrous pearl. So the Christian spirit of forgiveness evil into good and overcomes evil with good.

On the Cross Christ prayed for His persecutors and murderers, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." On the Cross, too, He forgave that thief who, but a moment ago, with his brother thief, had been mocking him and reviling him. But I always think that the greatest instance and example of our Lord's forgiveness of an injury was His forgiveness of Peter. It was Peter, you remember, who once asked Jesus how many times he was to forgive his brother. And Jesus told him until seventy times seven. I suppose Peter never really took that in, or understood it, till that night in the courtyard of Caiaphas, when, just after he had been cursing and denying his Lord, the door opened, and Jesus, bleeding and bound and spat upon, was led out the courtyard, and, hearing Peter's oath, turned and "looked upon Peter." When Peter saw that look of pity and love and forgiveness, then he understood, and not until then, what Jesus meant when He said, "Until seventy times seven."

That was the kind of forgiveness which Peter needed, and that is the kind of forgiveness which you and I need. I am sure Peter must have been thinking of that when, long afterwards, he wrote one of his Letters and said: "Be ye all of one mind. Love as brethren. Be pitiful, not rendering evil for evil; but contrariwise, blessing." And again, those wonderful words about Christ: "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that ye should follow in His steps, who when He was reviled reviled not again. When He suffered, He threatened not, but committed Himself to them that judgeth righteously. Who his own self bare our sins in his body on the tree."

WORTH QUOTING from page 2

hands. Somehow, in God's economy, man must work. Not only must he work if he is truly to succeed, but he must join his task with the Creator's. The greatest labor union in the world is mentioned by the Apostle Paul: "We are laborers together with God."

Jesus insisted that man, if he would have life, must not sit in idleness. "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God," he said. He pledged us we should find when we sought, but nothing is promised to those who will not try.

Discipline does not come easily to man. Spiritual discipline seems hardest of all. But without it, man's life will become shabby and fall to ruin. We must do something for ourselves if we expect help from Heaven. Salvation does not come from works. But works come from salvation!

Lon Woodrum

* * *

Christian witness must express itself in the deed, in the act through which competent Christians give life to the Christian ideal. Christians must write a contemporary Acts of the Apostles. Christian witness must be

expressed in measures that manifest the realities of world law and order, economic justice and racial brotherhood. G. Bromley Oxman

* * *

The real reason for Christian education is not to fight a national crime wave but to enrich the lives of the younger generation. Battling crime and communism and the other evils of the time is a very negative use of religion. The real purpose of our Christian teaching is that our boys and girls may have the joy of knowing God, and the abundant life which Christ can inspire.

Edwin T. Dahlberg

* * *

Hate is all right if you know how to resolve it into love, but it will kill you if you have to live with it.

Arthur Miller

* * *

Why must "Prepare to Meet Thy God" always have to be spoken in a forbidding tone? "In his presence there is fulness of joy and at his right hand there are pleasures forever more." How often Jesus counselled men to get ready for — a wedding feast. W. B. J. Martin

* * *

Worship is the contact and communion of God and Men. It is the dramatic enactment through symbol and word of Divine mysteries in which God is present and is felt and understood as giving himself to man. This is the heart of religion in every age and time and under all manner of outward forms and expressions.

Charles Wesley Lowry

* * *

Strange is the vigor in a brave man's soul,
The strength of his spirit and his irresistible power,
The greatness of his heart and the height of his condition,
His mighty confidence and contempt of dangers,
His true security and repose in himself,
His liberty to dare and to do what he pleaseth,
His alacrity in the midst of fears, his invincible temper are advantages which make him master of fortune,
His courage fits him for all attempts, makes him serviceable to God and man,
And makes him the bulwark of his being and his country.

Thomas Traherne

* * *

People cannot be ordered to love and preserve freedom and to create instrumentalities to carry it forward. They must learn these things; they must develop attitudes which permit freedom to prosper; they must grow in willingness to try new ways.

One of the most profound and significant insights of our founding fathers was their perception of this truth. Washington, Jefferson, Adams, Madison all noted the central importance of education in developing and maintaining a nation of free men. Jefferson perhaps put the matter most succintly in his oft-quoted statement: "If a nation expects to be ignorant and free in a state of civilization, it expects what never was and never will be." A society of free men must indeed be erected on a foundation of education. Hollis L. Caswell

* * *

Faith will conquer all if we know what we believe to be true.

George Sokolsky

* * *

The worst thing about the Devil is that most people flatly deny his existence. Obviously he can thus do considerable damage to body and soul without ever being blamed.

Dagobert Runes

* * *

I like not only to be loved, but also to be told that I am loved. The realm of silence is large enough beyond the grave. George Eliot

* * *

Hundreds of people can talk for one who can think, but thousands can think for one who can see. To see

clearly is poetry, prophecy and religion, all in one. John Ruskin

* * *

If I do not love my neighbor whom I know, how can I love the human race, which is but an abstraction? If I have not learned to work with a few people, how can I be effective with many? Arthur E. Morgan

* * *

The reputation of a man is like his shadow: it sometimes follows and sometimes precedes him; it is sometimes longer and sometimes shorter than his natural size.

French proverb

* * *

It is the men who make the roads, but is is the women who teach the children to walk on them.

French proverb

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Bad will be the day for every man when he becomes absolutely contented with the life that he is living, with the thoughts that he is thinking, with the deeds that he is doing, when there is not forever beating at the doors of his soul some great desire to do something larger, which he knows that he was meant and made to do because he is still, in spite of all, the child of God.

Phillips Brooks

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There is no one but yourself who knows whether you are cowardly or cruel, or loyal and devout. Others do not see you, they guess at you by uncertain conjectures; they see not so much your nature as your art. Therefore, do not cling to their judgment; cling to your own.

Montaigne

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The world is filled with people who have worked hard but have little to show for it. Something more than hard work is necessary; it is creative thinking and firm belief in your ability to execute your ideas. The successful people in history have succeeded through their thinking. Their hands were merely helpers to their brains.

Claude M. Bristol

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One should be either sad or joyful. Contentment is a warm sty for eaters and sleepers.

Eugene O'Neill

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Christ never allowed men to straddle the fence. He always demanded a choice. Billy Graham

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Our human relations have deteriorated, as is indicated by numerous incidents of bigotry and intolerance, and our world relations are at the lowest ebb in all our nation's history. What's wrong? The torch of religion may be lit in the Church, but it is not burning as it should in the family, in the shop, or on the street. Democracy is in trouble today and only the Christian heritage can revitalize it.

Judge Luther W. Youngdahl

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One trouble with the world is that so many people who stand up for their rights fall down miserably on their duties.

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The most miserable people I have known have not been those who suffered from catastrophes — which they could blame on fate or accident — but those who had everything they wanted, except the power to enjoy it.

Sydney J. Harris

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In an article "What's This Success Thing?" Ellis Parker Butler once listed: to own; to seem; to know; to do; and to be.

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Children, like plants, should be cultivated only to a depth necessary to destroy weeds, as deeper probing is likely to injure tender roots.

Marcelene Cox

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The most important single factor making for success in marriage is the willingness to think double.

Marcelene Cox

I can see how it might be possible for a man to look down upon the earth and be an atheist, but I cannot conceive how a man could look up into the heavens and say there is no God. Abraham Lincoln

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Not in clanging fights and desperate marches only is herosim to be looked for, but on every railroad bridge and fireproof building that is going up today. On freight trains, on the decks of vessels, in cattle yards, in mines, on lumber rafts, among the firemen and the policemen ,the demand for courage is incessant and the supply never fails. William James

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Pessimism is only cowardice reduced to a system. John Bailey

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Goodness is the only investment that never fails. Thoreau

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The shortest way to do anything is to do only one thing at a time.
Martin Luther

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Christianity must get down to the market-place, for unless we "gossip" the gospel we had best shut up.
East Asia Conference

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Don't be so heavenly minded that you are of no earthly use!

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A religion that does nothing, gives nothing, costs nothing, suffers nothing, is worth nothing!

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We never need to worry about not finding God at home when we knock.
Leonard Clough

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Religion cannot become suddenly real. The sooner in life we start the better. The more we accept reality in ordinary days the more surely the sun will shine particularly on the dark days. Religion is the most demanding of all masters and the most rewarding of all givers. As we learn to live our whole life for God, He meets us in any part of it. Those who live all their lives and their whole selves before God will not by so doing escape life's problems. Religion is no magic want. But they will find God real and good, and life well worth living. As they grow deep and genuine in reality they will find a new kind of peace and an inexpressible joy . . . found only at the depths of life.

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Nels Ferre

My subject, "Too Short," was inspired by the story of an eccentric old lady in whose belongings was found a large bag labeled, "Pieces of string too short to use." We smile at that, but today I should like us to take an inventory of our work and accomplishments and see how many have stored away . . . some items that are just a bit "too short" to be of most help in doing the job we have set ourselves to do.

As a treasurer, I am especially interested in the financial part of a program. I know that the success or failure of our financial program depends on whether we are "too short" in our efforts and consecration to our task.

As I was going over reports . . . I labeled a bag "Pieces of work too short." I would not say "too short" to use or "too short" to be worthwhile, but just "too short."

Mrs. H. F. Powell in **Union Signal**

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Goodness is a road rather than a pattern, and every turn of the road reveals the more that wem ay become. Higher ideals, cleaner fun, more sincere friendships, the kind of self-respect one can sleep with — these are some of the ways that goodness pays.

Ralph W. Sockman

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The poorest man is not he who is without a cent, but he who is without a dream.

Eugene P. Bertin